

Identity & Sound:

Exploring Audio's Natural Storytelling Ability



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Introductions!

- I'm a senior at Indiana University Bloomington
 - BFA in Digital Art
 - Audio and video were a main focus for many years
 - My recent work centers around game design and 3D environment design
 - Overall, I attempt to find interesting ways of blending audio with different branches of Digital Art
- Art History minor
 - Long story short:
 - History of African Art set the groundwork for the project
 - The final project for that class involved a gallery installation, with my contribution being an audio installation



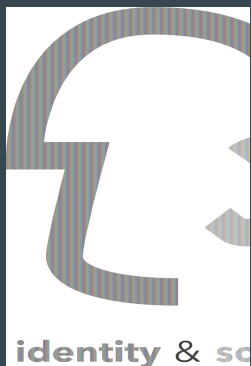
Origins of The Project (An Audio-Based Nkisi)



- Nkisi
 - A sculptural object crucial to the religious beliefs held by a group within the Kong in central Africa
 - Created by contributing different items, empowering the object
- **Prof. Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz** pushed the incorporation of my audio work
- Audio-based Nkisi
 - allowing for gallery attendees to speak into a live, always recording microphone, and hear the obscured audio played back.
- The final installation in the I Fell gallery inspired the original installation idea and became the basis for the final piece!

Identity & Sound: The Original Pitch

Identity & Sound is an interactive audio installation that allows for participants to build an audio collage that will loop for the entirety of the installation. Over the course of the event, interested guests can add whatever they wish to the collage. For the privacy of the participants, each voice is obscured and layered on top of each other. The intention is to use the audio data to determine the different ways space and social norms influence the behavior of individuals, and how that behavior, like a fingerprint, forms a unique atmosphere and identity for each location.



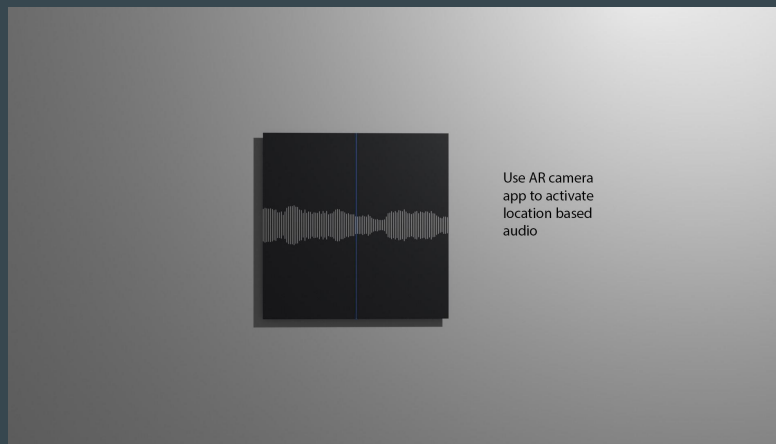
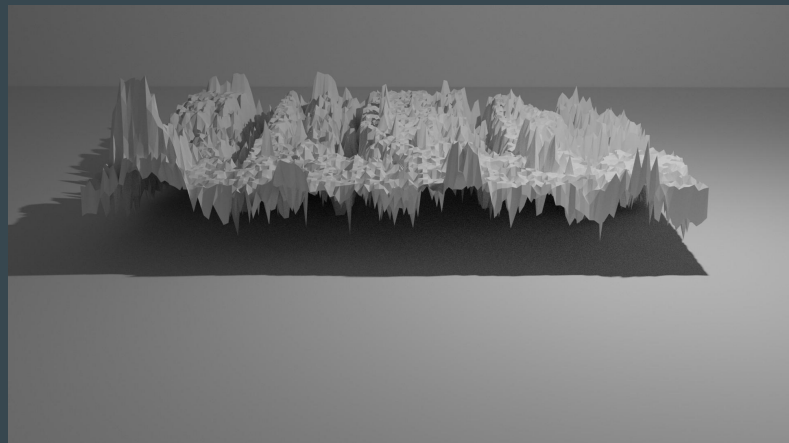
Identity & Sound: Explained!

- A live installation involving the real-time production of audio.
 - Sourced from the customers/visitors of the hosting location
 - And the location itself!
- The installation would last 5 hours with the recording looping every 30 minutes leading to an ambient piece depicting the soundscape in the environment
 - Thanks to the looping and audio effects such as reverb and delay, the voices will be masked, leaving only the volume and general tone of voice still audible.
- The final product is represented two ways.
 - Art
 - Data



The “Art Piece”

- When pitching the idea, the aesthetic purposes were my main inspiration
 - The end product from an art perspective is the an audio piece
 - an obscured ambient peace that is made organically by the spaces natural sounds and the sounds made by the guests.
 - An interactive piece
 - Spaces that wouldn’t traditionally feature art pieces allowed for live creation of art
- A visual accompaniment
 - The waveforms produced by the project were originally intended to be rendered as 2D and 3D shapes and produced physically using laser engraving and wood or paper, creating a visual companion piece



The “Data”

- In addition to the artistic leanings, the data could be used to show a few things to businesses
 - the general attitude of the guests in an organic way
 - A lot of businesses rely on surveys to gauge happiness of guests
 - The audio can also be used to show how interested the guests are in performances
 - This exploration can push businesses to dabble in more experimental performances
 - Lastly, there is a brief anonymous questionnaire each participant fills out
 - This survey, yields data about the success of experimental performances

Audio & Identity Brief Survey

This survey is anonymous and is entirely optional. We appreciate your time and your responses! If there are any questions, feel free to ask the installation host (you're more than likely standing in front of them!)

How do you feel about this installation?

Your answer

Would you be interested in further installations (of different varieties)

Your answer

Do you generally enjoy musical performances in bars and other appropriate non-music venues? ("Other" option available if you wish to provide a detailed response!)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

Identity & Sound ran into some problems...

General difficulties

- The overall concept didn't change much since the original iteration, however a few minor (and one major!) problem arose:
 - Anonymity
 - Legality of the project is crucial
 - Anonymity was often demonstrated to prove it's effectiveness
- Audio volume (and the soundtrack of places)
 - A few locations had background music playing or loud crowds
 - Difficult to get clean audio with disturbances
- The big one: Covid-19 and the closing of business
 - Closing of business
 - Social Distancing
 - Can't do public installations when there aren't public spaces!



Original



Filtered

Consent for Sound & Identity

By filling out the form below, you are allowing the recording and documenting of your voice and your answers to the question.

* Required

I understand that my voice will be recorded. (The recording will only exist in the context of this audio project) - Please sign your name below *

Your answer

I understand that this project will be displayed in a public setting in the future. - Please sign your name *

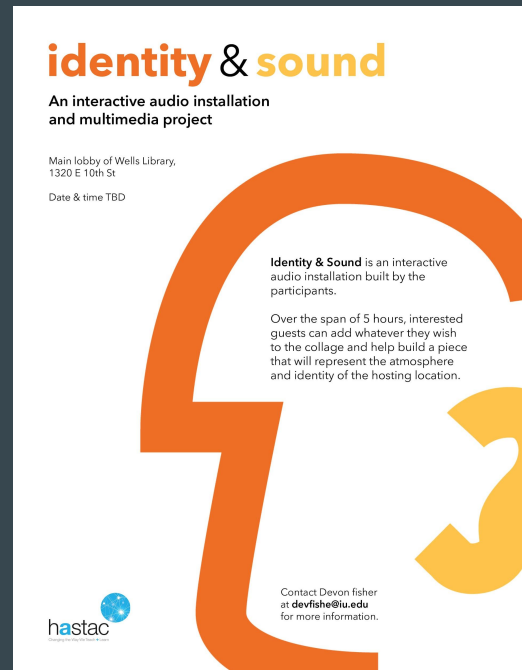
Your answer

I have read the forms, understand the use of my voice, and understand my participation in this project. - Please sign your name *

Your answer

Where we're at now!

- Postponing of planned installation
 - The string of local installations (including one planned for the local conference and my BFA thesis show) all were either cancelled or postponed indefinitely.
- Rethinking audio as identity and as a format for storytelling
 - My other thesis work involves 3D environments and virtual storytelling
 - Since the pandemic, I've begun filtering through old memos and audio recordings of friends and family to populate my environment (with permission)
 - This processes utilizes the natural conversations I've recorded over the years to produce a natural feeling environment safely
- The eventual return of the project once locations reopen
 - The idea is something I am attached to and would love to see happen again!



One Day...

Thank you for listening!